

Contributed

BAPTIST HISTORY AS EXHIBITED IN THEIR RECENT WRITINGS.

IV.

We pass now to consider the history of the doctrinal teachings of the Baptist Church. Dr. McGlothlin is very full in his statement of the "Religious Views" of the Anabaptists: (1) "In general, the Anabaptists accepted the common Catholic and Protestant doctrine of God. * * *. A few like Denck and Hatzer, doubted, or denied the essential Deity of Christ; and, on the other hand, Melchior Hofmann and his followers denied the humanity of Christ * * *. (2) They opposed the Augustinian theology of the Reformers, insisting vehemently on the freedom of the will and complete moral responsibility. The theology of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin appeared to them to be contrary to the Scriptures, dishonoring to God, and dangerous to morality. In these views they anticipated Arminius by almost a century. (3) The Anabaptists maintained the right of the individual to interpret Scripture for himself; and some of them, at least, asserted the superior authority and sanctity of the N. T. over the O. T. * * *. (4) The true church was composed of believers only—'saints' * * *. Infant baptism was regarded as without warrant in Scripture. * * *. The mode of baptism was never a matter of discussion * * *. (5) The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper had no sacramental significance. Baptism was rather a declaration of faith and forgiveness than a sacrament of cleansing or regeneration. (6) Not much is known of the officers and organization of the Anabaptists. * * *. (7) On eschatology there were great differences of opinion. The majority, perhaps, held sane and Biblical views; but expectation of the early return of Christ bred the wildest fanaticism in others. * * *. Thomas Munzer also had believed in the use of the sword * * *. (See Ency. Relig. Eth. Vol. I, pp. 410-411) Dr. Whittitt writes: "The tenet by which they became most widely known was the rejection of infant baptism * * *. their general type of doctrine is understood to be Arminian. So far as is known the brethren all opposed Luther's doctrine of justification by faith, insisted upon the freedom of the will and denounced predestination" (Johnson's Univ. Ency. vol. I, p. 170).

Dr. Newman writes on this subject: "All Anabaptists * * * were anti-Augustinian in their anthropology, many were chiliastic, many anti-trinitarian, some were pantheistic and antinomian, many were communistic, and none (so far as is known) insisted on immersion as the exclusively valid act of baptism." (New Schaff-Herzog, Vol. I, p. 457) of Mr. Smyth and his followers the first of the English to adopt the anti-pedobaptist views, and the "declaration of their faith" "in 1615" Dr. Newman says: "Arminian views are clearly and moderately set forth with respect to God's relation

to the fall and to human sin." Of Thomas Helwys he has this, "he held to a moderate type of Arminianism." (N. S. Herzog, Vol. I, pp. 458, 459). Of the founders of the American Baptist Church or churches Dr. Newman informs us that "most of those" in Massachusetts were Arminian (Hist. Bapt. p. 81), that among "the first Baptist Churches of America" "Arminianism * * proved far more popular" (p. 239), that among "the New England Baptists" "the great majority of their churches were Arminian" (p. 243), the First Church in Providence, R. I., which was at first Calvinistic (p. 85) became "Arminian" (p. 253), the First Church of Boston was under Arminian influence (p. 256), that "Arminianism of the Wesleyan type appeared among the Baptists of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont," "in 1778" (p. 269), that of the Baptist Churches in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut in 1740 "all but four or five seem to have been Arminian" (p. 271), and that in 1775 in Virginia Arminianism had grown so strong among the Separate Baptists—who united with the Regular Baptists in 1787—as to divide the church almost half and half. (pp. 298-300). "The great majority of the Baptists of today hold to what may be called moderate Calvinism" (p. 6).

Of Roger Williams and his views of baptism Dr. Newman tells us that "as regards the manner of the baptism it is probable that he thought strict adherence to primitive practice required true immersion by pressing the head forward." (p. 81). Of those who succeeded Williams he writes, "they laid much stress on the ceremonial imposition of hands after baptism as an indispensable qualification for church-fellowship." (p. 85). "By 1712 all the ministers in the Jerseys had submitted to the ordinance" "of the laying on of hands." "In the early history of the denomination in Pennsylvania differences of opinion appeared with respect to the laying on of hands. By 1729 practical unanimity seems to have been reached in favor of the rite." (pp. 208, 214).

Of the polity of the anti-pedobaptists we notice the general belief in the independence of each organization, but oftentimes in their Associations they border on to what has been termed "Presbyterianized Congregationalism," but in 1774 we find "in the Virginia Separate body,"—which thirteen years later united with the Regular Baptists, and became the Baptist Church of Virginia which we know today—"a query was raised: 'ought all the ministerial gifts recorded in the 4th of Ephesians, 11th, 12th, and 13th verses to be in use at the present time?' A majority favored the affirmative; 'it was 'brought up again' and 'it was decided almost unanimously 'that the said offices are now in Christ's Church.' It was further resolved 'that the said offices be immediately established' and 'Samuel Harris was chosen apostle by unanimous consent' 'for the Southern district of the Association,' 'John Waller and Elijah Craig' being 'constituted apostles' 'for the Northern district.' 'The

apostolate" continues Dr. Newman, "was simply episcopacy or general superintendency under another name" and was "evidence of the close relationship of the Separate Baptist movement to the Methodist." (pp. 298-299). This polity only stood for a very short time, and just one year later this same Baptist Association adopted the Philadelphia Confession, which was Calvinistic.

With reference to an educated ministry Dr. Newman writes of the Baptists in Virginia in 1793—which was 154 years after Roger Williams had begun the movement in this country:—"it does not appear that they had enjoyed the services of a single collegebred man." "It was a common thing among them for a recent convert with an ordinary education, or none at all, to begin at once to preach." "The early Baptists of Kentucky were as a rule thoroughly imbued with prejudice against the educated and salaried ministers." Again commenting on the Baptists of the beginning of the 19th century Dr. Newman says: "The mass of the Baptists were indifferent or hostile to ministerial education." "Many who favored * * * literary education would have looked upon a modern theological seminary as a human effort to accomplish that which is God's sole prerogative." (pp. 304, 336, 380, 381).

From these quotations we gather (1) that the early Anabaptists, or the anti-pedobaptists of 350 years ago were thoroughly Arminian, even rejecting "justification by faith," that some of them denied the essential Deity of Christ, some His essential humanity, that baptism was simply an outward form of "declaration of faith" not a sacrament of cleansing, that the mode of baptism was "affusion," that they were for the most part an ignorant mass bound together by their opposition to infant baptism and their chiliastic ideas; 2. That the early Baptists of England were for the most part Arminian, though some as early as 1679 adopted a confession that was thoroughly Calvinistic; (3) That the early Baptists of the United States were predominantly for the first 150 years Arminian, though many were Calvinistic, that they in many States, as Massachusetts, New Jersey, etc., for 75 years made the laying on of hands after baptism a part of their belief, even "a condition of communion," that they usually practiced the independent Congregational government, but in one instance introduced episcopacy, that for 200 years of their history they not only had no educated ministry—save occasional individuals, but were actually "hostile to ministerial education"; (4) That in all the 375 years of the modern movement which had its rise in Anabaptism and is today represented by the Baptists, there is but one thing in which the identity of the whole movement can be traced; not in their polity—for this has varied from extreme independence to Presbyterianized Congregationalism and episcopacy, not in their theology—for this has varied from Arminianism and anti-nomianism to the rankest type of hyper-Calvinism; from the denials of the essential Deity,